

Clackmannan Stone-person (2007-2011/2016): Our Town Story, Millennium Dome, 7.9.2000

Andrew Gryf Paterson., 15.3.2016.

"In the [Millennium] Dome we have a creation that, I believe, will truly be a beacon to the world" said guid-auld-sick Tony Blair in 2000, maybe what he sub-consciously meant was some sort of plot *against* what many others called Common-Sense. Other than the Great-White-Folly-It-Was, costing over £1.2 billion in today's money, and one of UKs most recognizable landmarks of excessive New Labour optimism. It was intended to evoke the Spirit of the 'ye-old-good-times/we survived/won' Festival of Britain (1951). Lets be brutally honest, more of the same Global-Capitalist Fair-type posturing in anticipation of New Millennium's goodies for trans-national Corporations. Critic Jonathan Meades better thought to consider it as a "Museum of Toxic Waste", and that is rather apt isn't it, as most of the contents of the Dome were scrapped, sold-off and demolished, and probably not much of it was environmentally-friendly. Shame! Only the outer skin surface still remains on site of this rather hollow-but-expensive ambition. The rest is probably in landfill or in even-wealthier pockets, bank accounts or physical 'treasure-chests'.

There was one redeeming feature in my opinion worth recalling in public, even something I was happy to have had a wee part in.. The 'Our Town Story' project, sponsored in the title-even by a famous globally-known burger-joint, invited kids and young people from all across local councils in the UK to stand, almost at the centre of the Global Temporal World. Greenwich Mean Time Meridian sliced almost through the edge of that dome, it's coordinates 51°30'10.14"N 0°0'11.22"E. They were invited by the Powers-that-were to tell about where they come from, what was special about it, and in the manner that they wished to (or their Arts Development Officers' facilitated the towards) according to their talents, sparkiness and brilliance. It was arguably a good thing, due to the dearth of local or regional knowledge and awareness applied in the National Curriculum at the time. In my school days, I got pretty little that I remember. So, here follows is a carved notch on a public post, advocating Local Cultural Heritage as Resource, regardless of how it comes about, and in whichever brash, tasteless and flimsy packaging it comes in. There is something here I hope to fill your local heritage belly.

On the 7th of September 2000, it was Clackmannanshire's day for local youth to present themselves on stage, mixing up their corporeal lives in their contemporary-now, with the local heritage that they inherited by random-fortune of being born or raised on the north side of the Firth of Forth. An area

recorded in several sources to be in the so-called Post-Roman dark-ages as Manau/w Gododdin, those well-kent Brythonic-Pictish peoples, and birthplace of Cunedda, an early founding-leader of Welshdom. Later it was medieval hunting-grounds, a leading hot spot of Noble achievement and ingenuity, North-European catch and trade-point to the North Sea, Netherlands and the Baltics. And beyond that famous internationally for it's industry, textiles and glass, coal-mining and it's beer.

But those days are mostly gone. Glass is still made under different names, a well-distributed Williams Bro's micro-brewery fills a smaller space of local enterprisem, but most people now commute to work elsewhere, but enjoying the views coming home. Heritage tourism, figurative public-sculpture art, and artisan and makers village eventually emerged later in the New Millennium, from empty industrial blocks, museum drawers, and housing-estate round-about.

My part was small. I was commissioned in 1999 by then Clackmannanshire Arts Development Officer Rosa Macpherson to work with primary school kids making drawings of their circles of association to locality, which would then be scanned and animated into a background video-sequence for the performing arts. It was only my 2nd or 3rd work as an artist involved with 'community arts', and I was 25 years old at the time. However engagement with local and broader identity-politics was then, and indeed still, a concern or interest of mine. My position of presence at the Millennium Dome was as clear as a crystal view from The Law cairn, near the top of the Ochils, overlooking the Inch sidled next to Alloa. On the 7th September, the year 2000 in the so-called New Millennium, at that location coordinated above in the so-called centre of the temporal globe.. Despite my misgivings with the vacuous context, that space-time does not need to be justified. As small-part contributor to the localized Our Town Story project, I was entitled to be there supporting young people, re-representing themselves in the present, including the past, and of course with some hope for their futures.

Admittedly, it was also a sort-of coincidence that I was in London at that time, *independent* of the 'Wee County' contingent. I had 'escaped' my locality in the New Millennium that spring, running off to the big smoke like so many Scots looking for adventure, or new experiences beyond their inherited landscapes, becoming part of the diasporic population. It is worth keeping in mind there are more approximately eight to ten times more persons of Scottish heritage live outside Scotland than within it. Many of them go to London first, stay or move on, as it turned out I did. I counted myself as having the good fortune of a free-entry ticket and to be able to join the delegation without the long bus journey down, and to see the result of the process I had been involved with only at the beginning, and certainly

not towards the end result of representing the region, it's people and nature, as well as it's heritage and history in a short 20 minute performative package and exhibition. With a wealth of sensoria in the Millennium Dome it was unfortunately not possible to do much beyond other than utilize the trade-fair-like poster walls, plinths and glass boxes for artefacts, and an appropriate song-and-dance -bite of a complex layered place. However, they brought their young hearts and soul down from up North, into the industrial-corporate cavern of the United Kingdom. Some of them had never even been outside of their regional boundaries before, not even to Glasgow.

That day and locative space-time moment, it made me proud, like.